

## PASTG News Notes - April 2002

### **Meet JoAnn Giamette - Transportation Assistant** ... written by Sandy Groneberg

JoAnn Giamette is a second generation ARS employee, having started working for ARS eleven years ago as a clerk typist in Beltsville, MD. JoAnn's father also worked for ARS in the budget and fiscal area. JoAnn moved from her clerk typist position into an accounting role before taking time off while her children were young. Although JoAnn began her career with ARS in the Beltsville area, she was originally from Peoria, IL. When JoAnn moved back to Peoria, she applied for an accounting position and was hired.

As part of JoAnn's accounting position, she did relocation travel. When Carolyn Goad retired from the transportation assistant position in 1997, JoAnn was detailed to do that work. Eventually she was hired to be the next Midwest Area Transportation Assistant.

JoAnn said she learned her job primarily through doing things. She quickly became aware of the resources available to her and has always enjoyed finding answers on her own. JoAnn likes foreign travel as one of the best parts about her job, and she also enjoys the contact she has with people at field locations. Although JoAnn likes to keep busy, there are times when travel deadlines make her job almost too busy.

I asked JoAnn if she has any tips for those of us who do travel documents. I found her comments interesting. I expected her to say, "Be sure to tell everyone to get their travel documents in to me with plenty of lead time." Instead she told me about the Area Office's efforts to streamline the travel process by closely examining the delegation of authority levels to save us all paperwork. We received a different "delegation of authority" chart this past year, which allows us to do as much as possible at the RL level. One excellent example of streamlining is that once the REE-11 has been approved to bring in a candidate for an interview, secretaries can have the RL sign the AD-202 at the location level now rather than sending it to the Area Office for approval. Another example is that we no longer need to do the AD-750 for foreign travel - simply send a copy of the itinerary. It was very apparent from JoAnn's comments that the Area is working hard to make our lives easier. By the way, JoAnn did agree that receiving the travel documents with sufficient lead time definitely does make her life less stressful!

This past year, JoAnn received the AFM Gold Award for Excellence. I should have asked her if she has ever counted up how many foreign trips she facilitates in a year. This prestigious award is an indication of the quality work JoAnn does for personnel throughout our area.

When she isn't at the Area Office doing travel, JoAnn keeps busy with her four children, ages 13, 12, 10 and 9. As you may guess, spending quality time with them is her main extracurricular activity.

**Flashback** - submitted by Diane Cronk  
From a Professional Secretary Handbook, published in 1968.

Managing your Tasks:

1. Work calmly and steadily to complete tasks .
2. Prioritize your list of duties under these categories (1) To Do at Once, (2) To Do Soon, and (3) To Do When Time Permits.
3. Clean your desks frequently.

Appearance on the Job:

1. Good posture at all times - stand and sit tall, never slump.
2. Avoid sitting with crossed legs, especially if skirts are short and slim styled.
3. When standing, keep the rib cage pulled in and the derriere tucked under.
4. Enter a room with a smooth motion, with head balanced and chin parallel to the floor.

Dressing the Part:

1. Use makeup, but with restraint.
2. Keep to the natural color of your hair unless you can afford the money and the time to keep the coloring constant and inconspicuous.
3. Keep nails manicured and if you paint them, be sure they do not appear chipped or worn.
4. Take daily baths to guard against perspiration odor.

Good grooming and appropriate dress require homework. Appropriate dress requires preplanning what you will wear the next day and selecting suitable, harmonizing coordinates and accessories. Each garment should be pressed, clean, and ready to wear. If you are in need of slimming down, you may have to add to your homework the necessary body-trimming exercises or calorie planning.

Times change but some things stay the same ...

**Tips for Writing More Effectively** - submitted by Sandy Groneberg

Following are tips that may help you evaluate the quality of your writing.

- Stay away from jargon that a reader may not understand. Be direct and to the point. Busy people don't want to be impressed with extraneous materials or your large vocabulary. They simply want the facts.
- Ensure that all basic information has been included. If you are preparing a document in response to a request, have you included all the components required by the instructions? If you are preparing information about a meeting, have you included the Who, What, Why, When, Where?
- Pay attention to grammar. Check for agreement between subject and verb. If you need a reference for grammar issues, purchase a good style manual.

- Don't rely on "spell check" programs to do your proofreading. Spell check doesn't know that you should have used "their" instead of "there." Print out a hard copy to read, as you may spot things on hard copy that you don't see on your computer screen.
- Read out loud what you have written. You will catch wordiness errors as well as phrases that can be improved by using a thesaurus.
- Check your writing for redundancies, such as "free gift."
- Make a list of the information you want to convey. Start with the most important and end with the least important. The final information should include any action that needs to be taken by the reader.

## **Helpful Websites**

### **TRAVEL:**

#### Currency Sites

--Currency Exchanger	<a href="http://www.oanda.com/convert/classic">http://www.oanda.com/convert/classic</a>
--Interactive Currency Table	<a href="http://www.xe.net/ict/">http://www.xe.net/ict/</a>

#### Federal Travel Regulations

<http://policyworks.gov/org/main/mt/homepage/mtt/FTR/FTRHP.shtml>

FMD Travel Site	<a href="http://www.ars.usda.gov/afm2/divisions/fmd/travmain.htm">http://www.ars.usda.gov/afm2/divisions/fmd/travmain.htm</a>
Foreign Location Codes	<a href="http://dab.nfc.usda.gov/pubs/docs/tflc/tflc-cat/tflc.html">http://dab.nfc.usda.gov/pubs/docs/tflc/tflc-cat/tflc.html</a>
Foreign Per Diem Rates	<a href="http://www.state.gov:80/www/perdiems/index.html">http://www.state.gov:80/www/perdiems/index.html</a>
GSA Value Lodging	<a href="http://hydra.gsa.gov/regions/r9/travel/balv.htm">http://hydra.gsa.gov/regions/r9/travel/balv.htm</a>
Hotel/Motel Safety List	<a href="http://www.usfa.fema.gov/hotel/index.cfm">http://www.usfa.fema.gov/hotel/index.cfm</a>
Map Blast	<a href="http://www.mapblast.com/myblast/index.mb">http://www.mapblast.com/myblast/index.mb</a>
Map Quest	<a href="http://www.mapquest.com/">http://www.mapquest.com/</a>

Travel Warnings & Consular Information Sheets: [http://travel.state.gov/travel\\_warnings.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel_warnings.html)

Vaccinations for foreign travel <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/index.htm>

Visa Information [http://travel.state.gov/visa\\_services.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa_services.html)

Country's foreign entry requirements <http://travel.state.gov/foreignentryreqs.html>

### **Is it my computer? Or is it me?**

If we could create a new Murphy's Law, it would be, "Whenever I have a tight deadline to meet, that's when my computer 'acts up,' for sure." If you have the document done by your deadline, that's when the printer won't work! As Program Administrative Support Personnel, troubleshooting is an important part of our job, so here are a few tips to help you maintain your cool in those "hot" situations:

1. **Keep an open mind.** By keeping an open mind, you do not limit the possible causes or solutions to the problem. You should be telling yourself, "I am smarter than the computer and I can fix this problem."
2. **Keep your wits about you.** Slow down! Take a step back and collect your thoughts before you reapproach the problem. Remember that the computer is a piece of machinery and really is not out to make your life miserable. Use your powers of observation to search for clues.
3. **Be Objective.** If you have biases, you will be looking for things that will confirm them rather than finding a solution to the problem. Don't automatically blame the problem on the last person to use the computer!



4. **Use your senses.** If you don't use your senses to gather information, you may miss critical clues indicating the nature of the problem. Use your ears, eyes, nose, and touch. Maybe there is a weird smell or you noticed a noise before the problem appeared. If sounds are out of the ordinary, you may have a problem. Look at the lights on the drives to be sure they light up.
5. **Be Persistent.** The key to accomplishing almost anything is persistence. Persistence means that you will work to solve the problem in the shortest time frame, using all the possible resources available to you. Don't give up when your first idea doesn't work.

These ideas are from *The PC Survival Guide for PC Users*, by David Mertz, National Press Publications, 1995.

*It has always seemed to me that the best symbol of common sense was a bridge.*

- Franklin D. Roosevelt